

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A method of accessing instant messaging from a telephone comprising the step of:

5 presenting to a telephone user a subset of a predetermined user list, the subset representing users logged onto a data network;

responsive to the telephone user selecting a particular user from the subset of the predetermined user list, sending a message from the telephone user to the selected data network user using an instant messaging protocol.

10 2. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of presenting occurs upon receipt of a predetermined command from the telephone user.

3. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the step of presenting includes voice synthesizing names on the user list.

15 4. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the step of presenting includes playing back prerecorded names on the user list.

5. A method as claimed in claim 2 wherein the step of presenting includes displaying names on the user list on a display associated with the telephone.

20 6. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of presenting occurs automatically upon login by the telephone user.

7. A method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the step of presenting includes voice synthesizing names on the user list.

25 8. A method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the step of presenting includes displaying names on the user list on a display associated with the telephone.

9. A method as claimed in claim 6 wherein the step of presenting includes playing back prerecorded names on the user list.

10. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a DTMF command from the telephone user.

5 11. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a voice command from the telephone user.

12. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a proprietary signal from the telephone.

10 13. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of sending a message includes recording and sending a voice message.

14. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a prerecorded voice message.

15 15. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a prerecorded text message.

16. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a text transcription of a voice message.

20 17. A method as claimed in claim 1 further comprising the steps of receiving an instant message in response the message sent by the telephone user and notifying the telephone user of the receipt of the message.

25 18. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of sending a message includes the telephone user's telephone number and a duration of time the telephone user will be available at that number.

30 19. A method as claimed in claim 18 further comprising the steps of, during the duration of time, receiving an instant message in response the message sent by the telephone user and notifying the telephone user of the receipt of the message at the telephone user's telephone number.

20. A method as claimed in claim 1 wherein the step of presenting includes the steps of first determining whether the telephone user is logged onto the data network and if not then presenting the user list.

5 21. A method as claimed in claim 20 wherein the step of determining whether the telephone user is logged onto the data network includes determining if the telephone subscriber is a personal communications subscriber and, if the user is, maintaining a presence in the data network for the telephone user for receiving and forwarding
10 instant messages to the telephone user.

22. Apparatus for accessing instant messaging from a telephone comprising:

an telephone interface for connection to a telephone network;

15 an data interface for connection to a data network; and

a messaging module for presenting a user list of active data network users to a telephone user via the telephone interface and responsive to the telephone user selecting a particular user from the user list, sending a message from the telephone user to the selected
20 data network user via the data interface using an instant messaging protocol.

23. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module includes a call-back feature for notifying the telephone user when an instant messaging reply is received for the
25 telephone user.

24. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the data network is a local area network (LAN).

25. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the data network is a wide area network (WAN).

30 26. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the data network is an intranet.

27. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the data network is an internet.

28. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module is a portion of a voice messaging system in the telephone network.

29. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module is a portion of a server in the data network.

30. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module is a portion of a voice messaging system within a personal computer connected to the data network.

31. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module is a portion of a voice messaging system coupled to the telephone network.

32. Apparatus as claimed in claim 22 wherein the messaging module is a portion of a telephone network service.

33. A method of accessing instant messaging on the data network at a telephone comprising the steps of:

identifying a subscriber, a telephone number at which they can receive messages, and a period of time for which they can receive messages at this number;

establishing the user's presence and ability to receive instant messages on the data network during the specified time period;

where an instant message is sent to the subscriber during this period of availability, calling the subscriber at the predetermined telephone number and delivering the message.

34. A method of accessing instant messaging on a data network at a telephone comprising the step of:

identifying a telephone user as a subscriber, a telephone number at which they can received messages, and a period of time for which they can receive messages at this number;

establishing the subscriber's presence and ability to receive instant messages on the data network during the specified time period;

presenting to the subscriber a subset of a predetermined user list, the subset representing users logged onto a data network;

5 responsive to the subscriber selecting a particular user from the subset of the predetermined user list, sending a message from the subscriber to the selected data network user using an instant messaging protocol.

10 35. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of presenting occurs upon receipt of a predetermined command from the subscriber.

36. A method as claimed in claim 35 wherein the step of presenting includes voice synthesizing names on the user list.

15 37. A method as claimed in claim 35 wherein the step of presenting includes playing back prerecorded names on the user list.

38. A method as claimed in claim 35 wherein the step of presenting includes displaying names on the user list on a display associated with the telephone.

20 39. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of presenting occurs automatically upon login by the subscriber.

40. A method as claimed in claim 39 wherein the step of presenting includes voice synthesizing names on the user list.

25 41. A method as claimed in claim 39 wherein the step of presenting includes displaying names on the user list on a display associated with the telephone.

42. A method as claimed in claim 39 wherein the step of presenting includes playing back prerecorded names on the user list.

30 43. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a DTMF command from the subscriber.

44. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a voice command from the telephone user.

5 45. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of selecting includes the step of receiving a proprietary signal from the telephone.

46. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of sending a message includes recording and sending a voice message.

10 47. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a prerecorded voice message.

48. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a prerecorded text message.

15 49. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of sending a message includes sending a text transcription of a voice message.

50. A method as claimed in claim 34 further comprising the steps of receiving an instant message in response the message sent by the telephone user and notifying the telephone user of the receipt of the message.

20 51. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of sending a message includes the telephone user's telephone number and a duration of time the telephone user will be available at that number.

25 52. A method as claimed in claim 50 further comprising the steps of, during the duration of time, receiving an instant message in response the message sent by the telephone user and notifying the telephone user of the receipt of the message at the telephone user's telephone number.

30 53. A method as claimed in claim 34 wherein the step of presenting includes the steps of first determining whether the

telephone user is logged onto the data network and if not then presenting the user list.

54. A method as claimed in claim 53 wherein the step of determining whether the telephone user is logged onto the data
- 5 network includes determining if the telephone subscriber is a personal communications subscriber and if the user is, maintaining a presence in the data network for the telephone user for receiving and forwarding instant messages to the telephone user.